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ABSTRACT

Principals must integrate information originating from many sectors among the schools' constituents. The degree to which constituent groups participate in school activities helps determine the quality of instruction and learning. Crucial to the role of administrator is a network of interactions between people and things, school board pressures and the needs of students, fiscal realities as instructional demands, and legal requirements and adoptions in curriculum. Critical to the success of a leader is empowering the leader-follower relationship to develop motivation through a sense of shared interests and needs. In interaction with constituent groups, effective leaders rely on intuition, sensitivity, information gathering, exploration of alternatives and solutions, and motivating group action. Professional responses to concerns are among the essential requirements for effective leadership. As teacher-leaders communicate effectively across bureaucratic levels, the consciousness of the group changes and teacher-leaders are increasingly empowered through active participation in professional networks with peers. The school administrator who plays a facilitating role in empowering the teacher leadership process can enhance the overall effectiveness of the leadership process. The principal as a leader of professional people must be skillful in dealing with many interpersonal issues and empowering broader professional initiative. Instructional leadership is strengthened through the inclusion of subordinate participants, followers, and leaders. (Contains 52 references.) (TEJ)

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Constituency Leadership: A model for school leaders

Public Schools exist to serve the needs of the students who come to them. As formal leaders, school administrators work at the hub of community problems and needs. Public schools exist within the context of compulsory education, serving the interests of a complex society, grappling to buttress unity among the disintegrative pressures of differing cultures and ethnic groups. Pressures to serve the needs of dissimilar constituency groups is probably the most difficult aspect of school administration. But, in bringing together dissimilar interests and negotiating common ground, school administrators hurdle the demarcation separating management from leadership.

Constituency leadership as it will be developed in this writing is defined as leadership which goes beyond the limitations of administrative appointments, assignments and descriptions. Constituency leadership addresses interpersonal relations with those who would provide psychic and social support for the school. School constituencies are community groups who authorize schools to educate their children.

Greater attention is required to give school constituencies more expression on matters affecting their children. As the collective public is progressively better educated, there is greater sensitivity to the work of teachers and educators and greater demand for awareness given to shared cultural and psychosocial exigencies within their sector of the community. Wider community is also affected wherein each group has a vested interest in how and what is provided to students. Concern for school constituencies is important for resources, operations, cooperation

The principals office often seems like a switch board for information coming in from all over the community. From the school administrator's point of view, the position often feels like being at a communications center for community information. The school administrator is regularly integrating information together originating from many sectors among the school's constituencies. Just one illustration is the following short case: The principal picks up information about child abuse of a third grade female student. Information comes to the principal from the child's teacher, from the Salvation Army's after school program and from the child's aunt. The child is being emotionally abused by her mother. The principal must consolidate all of this information, ascertain its validity and call the state department of social services. Later on the aunt, who is also a leader among parents in the school, is given custody of the child and the principal plays a supportive role to the aunt as she struggles with the child's adjustments and the anger of her sister.

Everyday principals must compile and arrange hundreds of pieces of information, consider which pieces fit together with existing information, assess which ones are important, and which ones fit together in a pattern that indicate issues which must be dealt with at another level. But, more than just words and information, these pieces of information represent groups and individuals who are members of school constituencies. To the extent these groups and individuals participate in school activities, they provide support for the quality of instruction and learning in the school.

Crucial to the role of administrator is a network of interaction between people and things, between school board pressures and the needs of young people, between fiscal circumstances and the need for effective instruction, between community pressures and professional needs, between legal requirements and the need

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to adapt curriculum to a changing world. Working through conflicting pressures and needs requires an unusual sense of the human condition, tact, courtesy and the ability to negotiate with all sides. This puts a great deal of pressure upon the school administrator who stands at the focal point of all these pressures.

These community groups have an interest in what things are taught, how they are taught, safety issues in schools. A critical ingredient of leadership is dealing with conflict and stress and bring people together to solve problems and other issues which are sources of difficulty for school leaders. Dealing with opposing and conflicting pressures demands tact and courtesy beyond the capacity of ordinary human beings.

Constituencies in the school community include those interested in promoting economic and political, and social issues in the community. Local school district constituencies include teachers, paraprofessional employees, school board members and community groups they represent, taxpaying citizens, parents of private and parochial school children, older citizens, those who are retired and on fixed incomes, minority groups, various cultural and socioeconomic groups.

Schools concern children, adolescents and adults. Often they are the focal point of community problems. Adults employed in the school district must bear the strain of working amidst community struggles. We must expect that human frailties will be apart of what we must deal with. Expectations for schools will be based upon progress together, common values, vision and purpose. (Sergiovanni, 1990, pp. 54-71).

Establishing Group Communications

Many schools suffer from communications problems among employees. Lieberman and Miller (1984) develop these challenges in terms of teachers actions in an isolated world, with large blocks of work interaction limited to children. Teachers are largely without the presence of other adults when they are in their classrooms. Teachers generally teach alone, without the benefit of peers working in adjacent spaces nearby. The relationship of teacher to principal is often a question of obtaining privilege; consequently teachers are rarely forthright with a building administrator. Teachers in some schools are urged never to take a problem to a principal.

Teachers have always served as role models for their students. In hiring teachers it is important to consider issues beyond credentials and educational qualifications. As models for students in the community it is important that teachers represent high moral and ethical standards, represent models of literate citizens, set standards for work ethics and related standards and values for the young of the community. In selecting a new teacher it is critical these issues be addressed before employment. It is also important to remember that differing personalities belong with differing age groups and that some people do not have the personality to teach well, or relate well to young people.

Why Constituency Leadership?

Leadership is the influence a person asserts upon the voluntary behavior of others to draw people together and to motivate cooperative efforts. Leaders motivate people, to change individual behavior to group cooperation, and to give direction and purpose to the lives of other people. Participation in leadership activities of teachers is something school administrators have always dealt with to some extent. Accepting leadership participation by subordinates and followers is a part of successful leadership and should not be misconstrued as a threat to administrative leadership. Developed below as multiple leadership, teacher leadership developed and understood within the context of professional activities is a tool to strengthen the instructional initiatives of both school administrators and teachers (Burns, 1978; Gardner, 1990; Bass, 1990).

Multiple Leadership Roles

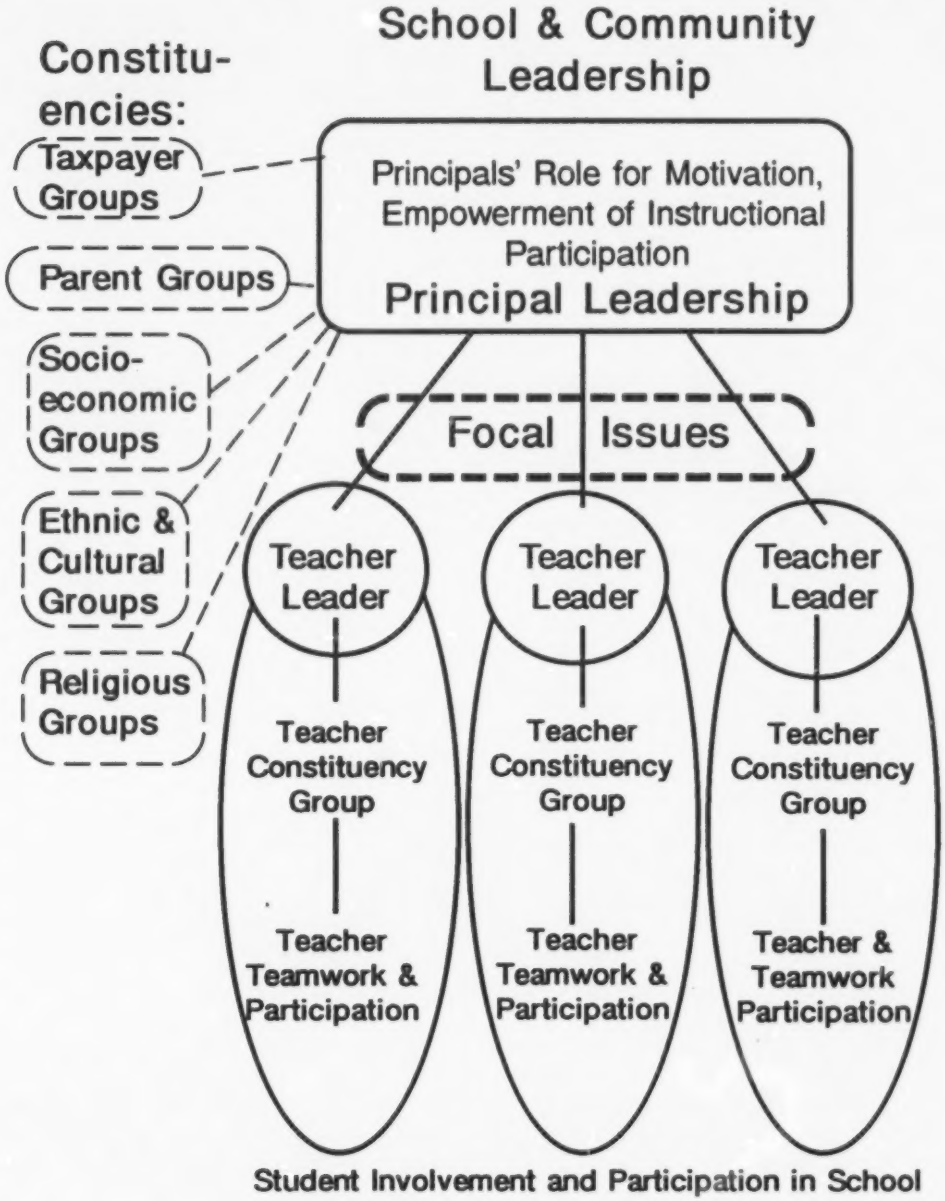
In organizations there are numerous constituency groups with their own leaders, their own agendas and perceptions of organizational events and the priorities for various aspects of organizational work. Leadership has both formal and informal aspects. Participants, followers, and leaders all have essential roles to play in group processes. To restrict leadership to the principal's office is to assume that teachers never influence group participation, or motivate others, or deal with difficult issues. Teachers often deal with conflict. They often influence decisions over school-wide issues and resources. They often influence collective opinions, often they lead their less experienced colleagues, and they contribute to the collective formation of school culture (Blau and Meyer, 1976; Deal and Kennedy, 1986; Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978).

Schools exist within the social ecology of communities and professional constituencies. Within schools administrative endeavors are influenced by faculty initiatives, and other pushes and pulls of people who work together. Within this matrix of human influences on school decision making teachers participate in a primary constituency group (Strodl, 1992a; Howey, 1988; Smylie and Denny, 1990; Hall and Hall, 1988; Koestenbaum, 1991).

Some administrators may feel nervous by what they perceive as issues that limit their power and authority. Teacher leadership can be articulated and developed as a constructive component of the instructional

figure 1

Constituency Leadership Model



leadership of schools. In this sense then, teacher leadership can become a desirable component of school leadership. Issues discussed in the teachers and room and parking lot as administrative criticism may have viability for school improvement if brought out into the open so they can be worked on. Some dysfunctional teacher-administrator communications may be overcome by developing teacher leadership skills, by improving collegial approaches and participation of teachers in the instructional leadership of schools. Figure 1, illustrates the communications described below.

Constituency Communications

(1) Critical to the success of a leader is the ability to empower leader-follower relationship. To incorporate followers into the group process, active participants must be motivated through as sense of common interest and needs. A bond of trust with followers is developed on the ground on common interest.

(2) Problem issues are focal points for group action. Problem issues are those issues that motivate groups to joint arousal. Leadership patterns change as individual concerns change, as interpretations about old concerns or new issues may arise, or groups mature to new perceptions and perspectives. Leaders in interaction with group participants use a combination skills: intuition, sensitivity, information gathering and involvement with followers, focusing on problem issues, exploring alternatives and solutions, and motivating group action (Burns, 1978, pp. 35-45; 297-303).

(3) Professional responses to concerns and difficulties are among essential requirements for leadership. The concern is almost any issue perceived as an area of common concern or need, including curriculum issues, disciplinary concerns, school-community concerns, instructional logistics, etc. This problem or ethical issue becomes the focal point of the leader-follower relationship. The leader articulates the focal issue in terms of community values, constituency standards, social equality, prudence, honor, honesty, fair play, ethical values to be developed in students, etc. (Burns, pp. 39-45; Garner, pp. 1-3).

Teacher leaders may not even think of themselves as leaders at the time. Teacher leaders are the active team members voicing problems, suggesting ethical perspectives, identifying key points, negotiating with authority figures, motivating others to join in and highlighting issues relating to trust, roles and identity (Burns, pp. 39-45). Leaders activate a bond between leader and follower. They engage themselves together with followers by means of shared values, trustworthiness and frank communications (Burns, pp. 35-8, 307).

Empowerment, participation and reciprocity in communication are based upon the bond of trust and credibility that exists between leader and follower. The communalities of purpose and needs tie leader and follower together where in the follower perceives that the leader sees issues according to similar perspectives and needs (Burns, pp. 39-74).

There is a developing ebb and flow of change in informal leadership. The leader-follower relationship recycles repeatedly with different problems and needs. Different patterns of informal leaders, followers and active participants emerge in various profiles of collaboration over time and concerns. Formal instructors are stronger leaders on some issues than others. Over time people's perceptions change, leadership skills mature, and old problems vanish from memory. But, new problems arise and new issues become focal points for leaders and followers. Given changes in circumstances and problems, individuals who are leaders in some situations are not in others. Some group members communicate better than others. Some seem to have stronger competencies than other group members, and others have better a capacity for overcoming problems.

As the teacher-leaders communicate effectively across bureaucratic levels over time group consciousness changes interpersonal experiences. Followers who are more active participants are increasingly empowered through new interpersonal skills and more active participation in professional networks with peers. The active teacher-follower gradually emerges as a recognizable teacher-leader of the group. Teacher leadership influence develops as the teacher leader unifies more participants, and connects with constituency groups. Over time leaders and followers become increasingly aware of larger school perspectives and become increasingly sensitive to the larger body of needs.

The school administrator who plays a facilitating role in empowering this teacher leadership process has a chance to be more effective in school leadership. The principal who articulates teacher leadership can reach more deeply into group concerns and motivations. Evidence of the existence of leadership skills among teachers activities are seen as empirical validation of the teacher leadership concept.

Intermediate Leaders

The power of intermediate leaders is in not formal authority, but the informal power of personal charisma resulting from group discussion, from consideration of the ideas of others and from the search for improved cooperation and information. Intermediate leadership occurs in active participation as followers and leaders within the cultures of schools. As power asserted apart from the boundaries of formal bureaucratic limitations, teacher leadership is informal motivational influence emphasizing persuasion, group sup-

port, trustworthiness and reciprocal communications. (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Hersey and Blanchard, 1982; Burns, 1978; Gardner, 1990; Bass, 1990; Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Blau and Meyer, 1976).

Many writers on leadership use teachers as examples of leadership, but within the literature of education teacher leadership has been sparse until recently (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Hersey and Blanchard, 1982; Burns, 1978; Bass, 1990; Gardner, 1990). Instead, terms such as leadership substitutes and teacher empowerment have been used. Smylie and Denny (1990) surveyed teachers on their activities in certain areas of teacher leadership. Other related literature includes site-based management and restructuring schools (Freeston, 1986; Pitner, 1986; Johnson, 1990; Howey, 1988; Hall and Hall, 1988).

Constituencies' Concerns and Goals

Although there are primary leaders in schools, there are others who influence the process. Leadership exists in the complex interactions of people. There is much to coordinate in motivating people to work together. There are pushes and pulls among people which are influential interactions. The influence of opinions expressed in the faculty room can have an impact on the unanimity of school culture and the decisions made in the principal's office.

Clearly there are many advantages to be derived from empowering leadership with more talented and experienced teachers. Such people have a positive role to play in leading other teachers in instructional and school policy development, in articulating curriculum change and in implementing instructional improvements. The areas identified suggest areas for professional goals included in graduate coursework for experienced teachers. The principal as a leader of professional people must be skillful in dealing with many interpersonal issues and empowering broader professional initiative. Instructional leadership is strengthened when we develop participation of subordinate participants, followers and leaders (Bass, 1990, pp. 116, 346-50, 516-20, 665).

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